DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 115 197 HE 007 102

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TITLE Competency: Alternatives For Achievement. The First Year.
INSTITUTION Our Lady of the Lake Coll., San Antonio, Tex.
SPONS AGENCY Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Aug 75
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; *Educational Alternatives; Educational Objectives; Financial Support; *Higher Education; Information Dissemination; Organization; *Performance Based Education; *Program Descriptions; *Program Development; Program Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Our Lady of the Lake College

ABSTRACT

Our Lady of the Lake College (OLL) has been engaged since early 1974 in coordinated development of a competency-based learning program. After tracing the program's evolution from its beginnings in 1971, described are: (1) competency formulation, evaluation and curriculum; (2) experimental programs - the Mentor Program and the Personal Development Seminar; (3) academic support systems - the Assessment Center and the Learning Center; (4) administrative support system - coordination and design; (5) dissemination of information - within the OLL community and to outside audiences; (6) the futures - the second year of the project and follow-up funding. While the first year of the project seems a successful one in terms of short-term objectives, it is more difficult to analyze progress toward the project's long-range objectives. Some of these objectives cannot be fully assessed until the first students graduate from the competency program. Some results at this time indicate that there is an increased interest in curriculum and educational process among faculty, students, and administrators. (Author/KE)

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First Year Report
on the Development of a
Competency Based Learning Program
at Our Lady of the Lake College

August 1, 1975

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The project described in this report was supported by a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

FOREWORD

Our Lady of the Lake College has been engaged since early 1974 in coordinated development of a competency based learning program. This program, in conjunction with the College's Curriculum of Alternatives, should provide an innovative and dynamic educational system that will prepare students for the future in a changing world.

The pages that follow detail progress made during the competency learning program's first year, and indicate plans for the second funded year of the project. Many of the report's conclusions are tentative, because of the project's short span of existence to this point. Nevertheless, I think the report indicates substantial accomplishment during this first year, and the prospect of further progress in the years ahead.

Prospects for continued outside funding cannot be the sole basis on which we experiment with and develop educational programs. As the competency learning program goes forward, we must find ways to institutionalize successful innovations. We hope that increased efficiency will result from these changes and will enhance the College's regular operations. The future of higher education and its institutions depends upon the wise and reasoned implementation of academic change.

The support of the U.S. Office of Education, and of the trustees, administration, faculty, staff, and students of Our Lady of the Lake has been invaluable, and their encouragement has made this program possible.

The report has been prepared by the Competency Learning Program Team. Howard Benoist served as primary author. Albert J. Griffith, Academic Dean, Sister Virginia Clare Duncan, Project Director, and many members of the OLL campus community have worked diligently to vitalize the academic spirit and programs on the campus. These efforts are bringing exciting results.

Gerald P. Burns
President

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I. INTRODUCTION

COMPETENCY BASED LEARNING AT OUR LADY OF THE LAKE

Our Lady of the Lake College's competency learning project got its start in October of 1967, when Dr. John McMahon, then President of the College, appointed a Steering Committee on Development to chart plans for the future of the institution. Following a three year planning process, the Committee in 1970 issued a REPORT that made a number of recommendations related to the College's educational system and by extension to the present competency learning project. Among these recommendations were: "creation of a freshmen 'learning to learn' course or orientation program, emphasizing the methodologies for seeking knowledge," development of a "curriculum based on the development of certain competencies and skills and not tied to courses and credit hours," "more calendar and schedule flexibility," and "more varied kinds of instructional activity." The Steering Committee's REPORT provides the philosophical basis for the College's Curriculum of Alternatives.

The relationship of the Steering Committee's recommendations to the present competency program is clear in the Committee's basic suggestion, which was that "OLL move from a plan which has set course requirements for all students to a plan which permits individually-tailored programs for different students." In these program, "certain competencies and skills should still be required of each student receiving a degree."

Following the Steering Committee's report, a college-wide meeting known as the Castroville Conference took place from February 28 to March 2 of 1971. The purpose of the Conference was to work out ideas on how the Steering Committee's recommendations might be implemented. The Academic Affairs Committee of the College took the ideas generated by the Castroville Conference and recommended that the College restructure its degree programs along the lines suggested by the Steering Committee--toward "specification and development of competencies."

Accordingly, the Faculty on April 19, 1971 accepted changes in the undergraduate degree program proposed by the Academic Affairs Committee. The new degree program listed four "Basic Areas of Knowledge" (for example, "Man's Artistic and Literary Expression"), and ten "Life-Time Skills" (like "Effective Use and Practical Application of Mathematics" and "Philosophical and Theological Questioning and Reasoning"). These areas of knowledge and life-time skills were to replace the required curricular areas that had been the basis of advising of students in the College's general education requirement--thus carrying out the Steering Committee on Development's recommendation that OLL do away with required courses and replace them with "competencies and skills."

The framework for a competency based general education program was thus built in 1971. It was only a framework, though, and more work was needed to make it a more effective approach. In recognition of this need, the San Antonio Conference of Spring, 1972 established volunteer faculty groups to work on the program. These groups continued to meet, more or less regularly, through the next Fall, each focussing on a particular knowledge or skill competence. It soon became evident that the lack of planning time and overall direction was making most of these efforts ineffective. The competency statements remained vague, and no criteria or procedures existed by which to evaluate student progress toward the competency objectives of the general education program. Academic advisors were left insecure about their progress and the methods used to evaluate them. It was clear that the program needed revision and standardization, and that evaluation was a critical priority.

When the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education, an agency within the Office of Education of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, began accepting proposals from institutions wishing to implement competency based learning programs, Our Lady of the Lake saw an opportunity to improve its developmental efforts. The College submitted a proposal to FIPSE, supporting it with demonstrated commitment and the efforts outlined above, and the proposal was accepted.

THE FIPSE PROPOSAL: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The proposal accepted by FIPSE was directed at planning and implementing an integrated competency based learning program at Our Lady of the Lake College. What seemed to be needed was not institutional commitment, facilities, or equipment, but rather the time and opportunity to provide concerted planning. The proposal recognized that effective change in the institutional program cannot come from outside. Planning and action must come from people familiar with the College's needs and prepared as part of the OLL community to follow the program through. While outside experts could provide valuable advice and information, faculty members already at the institution would be the best choices to plan the program and interpret it to the OLL community.

Accordingly, the project provides released time for two years for five faculty members (half-time) to serve as change agents for the College; the FIPSE grant supports about 70% of this released time and the College contributes the rest. The Assistant Academic Dean serves as director of the project, and her services are contributed by the school. In addition, a full-time systems analyst has the job of evaluating the program, and of designing systems changes to support the competency curriculum. Of a project budget of approximately $137,000 for the first year of the two year program, $102,639 is budgeted for personnel costs---largely released time. This reflects the project's orientation, as well as its philosophical commitment to the institution's community.

The FIPSE proposal lists nine "short term" objectives:

1. To identify specific learner competencies related to the major life-time goals of the College's general education curriculum.

2. To identify learner competencies for each area of post-college endeavor for which OLL students are preparing.

3. To describe every course and learning activity in terms of its specific competency objectives.

4. To construct and/or select appropriate entrance and exit competency assessment instruments.

5. To identify and design a wide range of alternative learning activities, enviroments, and schedules to assist individualized learning.

6. To implement necessary systems changes in admissions, scheduling, faculty usage, evaluation, and credit procedures in order to support competency based learning.

7. To assist all members of the academic community to function effectively in a competency based learning program.

8. To design and implement an orientation and personal development process to:

    a. interpret the College's philosophy and goals to its campus community;
    b. assist students to make responsible choices and decisions in their academic programs;
    c. provide continuing professional development for administrators and faculty.

9. To alter appropriate organizational techniques (eg. financial aid, registration, billing, etc.) to align them with the goals and processes of an individualized and competency based program.

In addition to these immediate goals, the proposal lists five long range objectives of wider scope and impact. The long range goals are:

1. To implement an open, competency based learning program which will:

   a. have a solid, liberal arts base;
   b. meet the needs of a highly diversified clientele;
   c. make accountability for learning a shared responsibility of student and teacher, with major responsibility on the student.

2. To produce a liberally educated, self-directive, socially conscious graduate, of upright moral character, who is able to "be for himself" and to "do for others."

3. To contribute to the improvement and enrichment of the local community and of society in general.

4. To increase the cost effectiveness of the educational program of the college.

5. To provide a successful example of an effective competency based program for other institutions wanting to engage in similar educational programs.

The assumption implicit in all of these long range goals is that a competency based learning program is the most effective and supportive means of achieving the desired ends.

The strategem for the first year's operation, then, has been to set up a team of change agents drawn from within the institution, and set them to work planning a coordinated competency based educational program and the systems needed to support it. Although the project director and the team have had primary responsibility for directing the project, they have had the help and encouragement of the faculty and administration, and the assistance of well qualified consultants to aid them. The rest of this report will detail the various stages of planning and implementation accomplished in the project's initial year, through the good will and contributed time and energy of a large portion of the OLL community.

II. GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCY PROGRAM

Since April of 1971, Our Lady of the Lake College has had a competency based general education program. The requirements for students (other than in their major or professional areas) have been set forth, not as required courses, but in terms of areas of knowledge and life-time skills to be achieved by all students in the undergraduate programs.

While the general idea still seems sound, it is clear that a combination of rather loosely defined competencies with the absence of clear evaluative criteria and processes has made the competency system (still often called "the new degree plan") less effective than it should be. The basic responsibility for determining when students have satisfied their general education requirements has rested with the students and their academic advisors. In order for a student to graduate, both student and advisor are required to certify satisfactory accomplishment of the general education competencies. The problem is that without clear evaluation criteria, and often without a clear and specific statement of the competency requirements themselves, successful achievement becomes a matter of individual judgment. Different advisors may require different levels and certifications of accomplishment. This is not fair to students, and most advisors do not like the responsibility of deciding standards and assessing competence is areas foreign to their own specialization. The first target for the FIPSE project has thus been to specify the general education competencies.

COMPETENCY FORMULATION

The first step in the revision or reformulation of competence statements was for the project director and change agent team to set up a procedure for specifying the competencies. Accordingly, the team met in September of 1974 to rough out the basic competence areas as a starting point. Dr. Andrew Wueste, a specialist in curriculum development, served as consultant as the team discussed various educational philosophies as the base for further development of competency statements. After several days of discussion, the team agreed on Philip Phenix's REALMS OF MEANING as a basic framework for the competency area breakdown. Within this framework, the team decided to recommend use of Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives to prescribe levels of attainment or competence.

Having decided on a framework for the competency statements, the team publicized the areas to the faculty, and set groups to work defining and specifying the competencies. From September through the next March, six competence teams (corresponding to Phenix's six patterns) reworked and revised the competence statements. Consultants for this process were Dr. Richard Meeth of SUNY, Buffalo, and Dr. Harold Hodgkinson, now director of the National Institute of Education. They worked with the competence teams on both formulation of the competence statements and preliminary definition of evaluation criteria.

In early March of 1975, the competence statements had progressed to the point that open hearings could be scheduled to ask the input and reaction of the OLL community. This response was taken back to the competence teams, the statements revised again, and on March 19 the final competence statements were presented to the Academic Affairs Committee (the College's academic policy-making committee) for acceptance or rejection. At that meeting the Academic Affairs Committee voted unanimously to recommend the competence statements to the Faculty.

On March 26, 1975, the chairperson of the Academic Affairs Committee presented the competence statements and associated resolutions to the Faculty. The Faculty approved the competency resolution in the following form:

> BE IT RESOLVED that the following six competency statements be adopted as the basis for the General Education program for all baccalaureate degrees at Our Lady of the Lake College:
>
> Graduates of Our Lady of the Lake College:
>
> 1. have developed effective communication skills.
>
> 2. have acquired sufficient understanding of their ever changing physical enviroment to cope effectively with it and make responsible and intelligent judgements about it.
>
> 3. have attained reflective and critical perspectives on their personal and social growth and interpersonal relationships.
>
> 4. have achieved a reasoned, integrated understanding of the religious and ethical dimensions of human experience, both personal and social.
>
> 5. have developed a discriminating perception of the artistic elements of their culture and, through synthesis, other cultures; and have developed the ability to describe and demonstrate their own creative processes.
>
> 6. have formulated a logically consistent world view, have defended it reasonably, and have applied it in a simulated situation to their life style and to some social problems presented to them.

The Faculty also approved a resolution making these General Education competencies applicable to students registering as freshmen after May 15, 1975, and to transfer students who enter that class (the class of 1979). A final portion of the resolution requires the Academic Affairs Committee to review and evaluate the competency based General Education program during the spring semester of 1976.

COMPETENCY EVALUATION

A major defect in the College's earlier competency program was the lack of a specific and workable evaluation system. The resolution passed by the Faculty on March 26 also provides for the establishment of six competency evaluation teams, one for each General Education competency, to "develop evaluation criteria and procedures." Each evaluation team is made up of at least four persons--a member of the FIPSE project team, two faculty members elected by the faculty, and one faculty member appointed by the Academic Dean. The FIPSE team recommended that no evaluation team have more than two from any one academic division. The reason for this was to achieve balance and to ensure interdisciplinary orientation in the general education competencies, and in general the recommendation was followed. The evaluation teams are expected to add membership from the student body, alumni, and various off-campus consultants whenever they are needed to plan effective evaluation levels and criteria.

At the end of the first year of the project, the competency evaluation teams have been set up and staffed, and given their mandate by the Faculty and administration. Some work on the specification of competency levels and design of assessment criteria has been done, and some of the teams are working during the summer. Because of the dispersal of students and faculty during the summer months, though, coordinated work on competency evaluation will not really begin until the start of the Fall semester. This job will be the highest priority of the project during its second year.

COMPETENCY CURRICULUM

An early plan for the project was to work out competency objectives for all courses usually seen as part of the general education program at the College. To this end, academic disciplines submitted the objectives for such courses to the project team in September of 1974. In the meantime, however, the team had thought out the process and been warned by the experience of other schools designing competency programs. The process decided on by the team follows the theory of competency based learning, which says that the first step is to specify and define the required competencies and designate the acceptable levels of competence. The second step is to design and implement the evaluation system and criteria; and only after this, as a third step, should the learning activities be set up. Instructors should know what competencies their courses are supposed to lead to, before they are asked to design the courses and specify course objectives. If courses are designed first and certified as fulfilling competence criteria that do not yet exist, the program is in trouble.

Therefore, it was decided to deemphasize course planning and construction of the competency curriculum until after the competence teams and evaluation teams were well along in their work. Several pilot projects were planned for the Interterm and summer sessions, after the competency statements had been approved by the Faculty. These curriculum development projects provide some released time for faculty members in statistics, Spanish, library, communications, and psychology to restructure courses on an individualized, modularized, or competency based model. Probably a good number of the present lower division courses will fit into the competency program with whatever revision is necessary to make them aim precisely at the general education competencies, but this step will take place after further progress is made on the evaluation criteria.

III. EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS

Formulation and specification of competence statements, and development of evaluation criteria and procedures, are the central objectives of the Competency Learning Project. Stemming from these, and important to the successful implementation of the competency program, are several experimental student oriented programs. In both the Mentor Program and the Personal Development Seminar the idea will be to prepare students to become effective learners both within the competency based educational system, and throughout their lives.

THE MENTOR PROGRAM

Because competency based learning differs in some important respects from more traditional academic programs (in stressing verified learning rather than courses, for example), and because the College's competency program will emphasize student motivation, self-direction, and initiative, the FIPSE proposal contains as an objective the implementation of an orientation and personal development process that will assist students to function effectively as independent learners.

In his consultant visit to the campus in November, 1974, Dr. Hodgkinson suggested a mentor program as a potentially viable way of meeting this objective. The team agreed, worked up a plan and presented it to the Curriculum Council on February 28, 1975. The Mentor Program, which was approved by the Curriculum Council and subsequently made part of the March 26 resolution passed by the Faculty, will provide each freshmen with two mentors---a faculty member and a sophomore or junior student. Each mentor team will work with a group of 17-20 students, beginning at orientation in August and continuing through the freshmen year.

The mentor idea is not a new one, and the planning team has benefited from the example and advice of various other colleges, including Austin College, Mars Hill College, and Sterling College, in designing OLL's program. During the four day orientation period, the new students will go through the orientation activities, academic advising, and registration with the help of their mentors. The mentors, chosen for their personal qualitites as well as for their knowledge about the College's academic and service programs, will act as academic advisors, guides, and friends to the freshmen. After orientation the mentors will continue close contact with the students during the Personal Development Seminar.

THE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR

The Personal Development Seminar will continue the process begun during orientation. The objective of the seminar is to help students function effectively both academically and personally at Our Lady of the Lake. It will continue the groups of two mentors and 17-20 students through both semesters of the freshmen year.

The seminar will focus on three areas that seem vital for student development and effectiveness in college.

1. Academic preparation is important for several reasons. Competency based and self-directed learning is a different process from that which many students are used to, since it emphasizes learning outcomes rather than specific courses and calls for a good deal of self-discipline and motivation from students. Because of Our Lady of the Lake's commitment to the West San Antonio area, and because many students from this area have had mediocre pre-college programs, some study skills development (reading, test-taking, studying) may be necessary. Each seminar student will be tested for entrance level basic study skills, and a regimen of correctional work will be prescribed for students with problems.

In addition, a major thrust of the academic portion of the seminar will be study in depth of a particular problem or research area in the faculty mentor's area of expertise. The point will not be the subject matter so much as the introduction to the process and methodology of intensive study. Research techniques, library use, formation of task forces, interviewing, assembling and using data---this training should serve the students well when they have chosen a major field and begun upper-division courses, and will be useful to them in most areas of study.

A third academic portion of the seminar will combine the first two in introducing a "critical thinking" component. Although logical thought processes are part of basic study skills, often students need both training in logical thinking and practice in working from evidence to formulate conclusions. The seminar will work with the students to improve their critical thinking processes.

2. A second area of concentration for the Seminar will be personal development. Besides academic prerequisites for college study like reading and study skills, students often need encouragement and assistance in assessing and improving their own personal development. The seminar includes work on improving interpersonal and group communication skills, assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses, interests and goals, and making effective use of the College's programs and the human and material resources available to the students.

3. Finally, the Seminar also aims to introduce students to the historical and cultural richness of San Antonio and the Southwest. Even students from the local area do not really know much about San Antonio's heritage, and students from other areas can benefit from exposure to other cultures and customs. The Hispanic-American and bicultural aspects of the San Antonio area will serve as a theater for increasing student awareness of and sensitivity to ethnic diversity and the social enviroment.

The Personal Development Seminar, then, has been planned to prepare students not only for academic success in college (although that is a major objective), but also for becoming fully developed, sensitive, mature adults capable of coping effectively with their rapidly changing world.

IV. ACADEMIC SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Since curriculum cannot exist in a vacuum, but must be carried out through learning activities and procedures, an important aspect of the planning for OLL's competency based learning program has been the strengthening or restructuring of academic support systems. As already indicated in this report, the project team decided to deemphasize the restructuring of courses and other formal learning experiences until further work had been done on competency specification and evaluation criteria. Two other academic support systems---the assessment center and the learning center---received more attention during the first year of the project.

THE ASSESSMENT CENTER

Competency based learning has as a basic requirement the evaluation of competence, so assessment becomes a vital component of the program, and takes on new roles. Although the College has had a testing center, its uses were limited to administration of certain standardized examinations---the Graduate Record Examination, the Miller Analogies Test, the Nelson-Denny Reading Test, and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). As an assessment center, the facility will continue to perform this testing function. In addition, it will expand to fill roles required by the competency program.

As described above, the College has prescribed six general education competencies and set up competency evaluation teams to design evaluation criteria and procedures. The Assessment Center will serve as the basic facility for holding resources for evaluation teams, for coordinating the evaluation process, and for the preliminary keeping of student competency records.

The Assessment Center is available to assist departments with administration of placement and credit examinations, and to help individual instructors with course testing. Under a grant from the National Science Foundation, the Assessment Center will receive two computer terminals, a test scoring device, and a printer for testing, item analysis, and limited tutorial applications. Presumably the Center will expand its capability in these areas, and the computer capability of the institution will be ample for such expansion.

In experimental stages at OLL is the assessment of life-time experiential learning. Since a large number of the College's students are "non-traditional"---adults returning to college and military personnel, for example---validation of learning gained through non-traditional and non-academic processes is becoming accepted as an academically respectable alternative. On-the-job training, creative work, travel, military career experience may all serve as learning experiences if they can be evaluated in an academically sound manner and validated. The project staff is working on procedures and policies to govern the assessment of experiential learning, and the Assessment Center would serve as the administrative and preliminary record keeping facility for the program.

THE LEARNING CENTER

Beginning as a Communications Skills Center in 1973, the Learning Center expanded considerably during the last academic year. A learning center becomes an especially important resource for OLL's competency program because of the emphasis on alternative learning experiences and individualized instruction. In January of 1975 the Learning Center moved from its shared quarters with the School of Education's Curriculum Library to its own facility in the Media Learning Center.

During the 1974-75 academic year, the Learning Center served over 2,500 students in a number of academic areas. A study skills-reading instructor was provided on a shared basis with Incarnate Word College, through a Basic Institutional Development Program grant. The English discipline staffed a communications skills clinic for students enrolled in English courses and for other students on a "need" basis. Calculators were available in a statistics laboratory, and psychology and sociology instructors used the Learning Center for modular and individualized instruction.

A problem with the operation of the Learning Center has been its lack of supervisory personnel. Faculty members have volunteered their time to serve as tutors in the Center, but this has not provided the supervision and management of materials needed to make the Center operate efficiently. With expanding computer capability, and the likelihood of an increase in computer assisted instruction, the Learning Center should continue to grow. A priority for the supportive academic systems should thus be adequate staffing of the Learning Center.

V. ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT SYSTEMS

As the curriculum changes to a competency based model, administrative systems must change as well. The largest modification is required by the increased flexibility of the competency based system. The change of emphasis from a few tightly defined required course sequences to learning results achieved through alternative learning activities, with the associated movement toward credit by examination, experiential learning, and other non-traditional evaluation techniques, means that administrative systems must be restructured to support the competency curriculum.

SYSTEMS COORDINATION

The project's emphasis in the redesign of administrative systems has been on a coordinated system linking the major administrative support areas of the College---the registrar, finance office, admissions, student aid. The project's systems analyst has been working with these areas to enhance communication and redesign the system. In February of 1975 the informal process was legitimized with the formation of a Committee on Coordination of Registrar and Finance Areas, with regular meetings through the Spring semester. A key punch project begun in July of 1974 has had the objective of transferring all student records to computer facilities. In general the key to the system that has been developed in the first year of the project has been planning for more effective use of computer operations.

To this point, OLL's computer requirements have been met through contracted service by the St. Mary's University Computer Center. This arrangement will not provide the flexibility required by the competency curriculum and the College's emphasis on alternative learning experiences. The St. Mary's computer is a batch operation system, and physical difficulties of communication (there is no capability for terminal hookups for OLL with the computer) are a problem for rapid information processing.

A systems study is now nearing completion at Our Lady of the Lake, and the Board of Trustees has approved (assuming a favorable recommendation from the study) purchase of a Datapoint 5500 computer that will provide the hardware capability for the College's planned integrated administrative system. This computer will initially provide nine video terminals, printers for hard copy, and the potential for expansion to meet the school's needs in the future.

THE SYSTEMS DESIGN

The design is for an integrated system that will link Admissions, the Registrar's Office, Financial Aid, and Accounting and Finance. A skeleton file will be built progressively on each student, beginning with the recruiting office listings of prospective students. When a student applies for admission, data from the admissions forms will be filled in. When the student enters and registers for courses, the admissions file becomes the basis of the registrar's Student Master File for that student. Not only will the system keep course data on students, but this information will also be "interactive" between the various administrative areas. Thus a change of address on a registration form will trigger similar updated addresses for billing, student aid, Veteran's Admininstration coordinator, and so on. A change in registration for a course will similarly adjust automatically the student's account, financial aid, scholarships, etc. Finally, when the student graduates, certain information will become part of the Alumni file, which retains the interactive capability. So if a student sends for a transcript and indicates a change of address, the computer will automatically change the student address in the file maintained by the alumni office.

While the entire interactive system should be much more efficient than the present operation, it is the system in the Registrar's area that most specifically concerns the competency learning program. The College's emphasis on alternative routes to learning means a much greater need for flexible educational management than in a conventional curriculum. There will still be regular semester length courses, but the system can no longer focus on this pattern exclusively. It must be adaptable to the various new demands placed on it by learning alternatives and the competency program.

A "Catalog Order" approach is planned to provide the necessary flexibility for registration and associated administrative operation. Instead of requiring a registration period of several days before each semester, where students stand in long lines to get into courses, the new system permits registration for any scheduled course at the student's convenience. The student "orders" a course ahead of time---just like shopping by catalogue or telephone. The course will be held in the computer in a "courses on order" file until the delivery date (the starting date of the course) arrives. On that day the computer prints a class list of registered students for the instructor, puts the course data into the student's currently enrolled file, and transfers the correct charge to the student's account. The student account resembles a revolving charge account, and monthly statements are automatically printed and sent to all students who do not show a zero balance on their account. The student can even use Master Charge or Bank Americard to pay the bill.

After the starting date for the course, a second date will signal the end of the learning experience. For standard courses this would be the last day of the semester, for others whatever the conclusion of the learning experience is scheduled to be. Some days prior to the ending date, the computer will print another class roster for the instructor's use as a grade report sheet. When grades are entered through a video terminal for a course, the computer will print a grade report for the student, and transfer the course data and grade from the student's "currently enrolled" file to his or her "student history" file. The student history file is used to call up or print the student's academic record and transcript on demand.

The student history file serves as the basic academic record for a student, and also manages the entire financial file for the student. Course charges, room and dining hall fees, parking fees, even bookstore purchases can be added as debits to the student's account, with payments, financial aid and scholarships entered as credits.

While the computer will initially permit all of these service and support transactions, it also has adequate reserve capacity for educational operations like computer assisted instruction. The first year of the competency learning program has not directed much attention to these areas, but a Minority Institutions Science Improvement project, which contains curriculum development support in the natural and social sciences as well as equipment for the assessment center, should stimulate progress in these areas in the near future.

Finally, the administrative and record management system outlined above is easily adaptable to record keeping for the various competency requirements now being planned. A dual system of grades and "competence units" is possible, or some other approach may be designed. In any case the capability for efficient administrative support of the program will be available.

VI. DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Publicity is included in the FIPSE proposal as a goal of the competency learning program, both in order to ensure the full implementation of the program at the College, and to inform other institutions about the process followed here. The program's first year has thus addressed itself to preliminary publicity efforts in these two areas.

WITHIN THE OLL COMMUNITY

Wide involvement of the OLL community is essential if the competency program is to cause meaningful institutional change. The project proposal recognized the importance of dispersal of accurate information about the program as a means of involving the community in its planning and implementation. To ensure general knowledge about the project's goals and activities, the greatest possible input of the College community into project planning, and wide acceptance of proposed changes in curriculum and support systems, the following methods for internal communication have been employed.

1. A project NEWSLETTER, published monthly and chronicling general news about project activities, consultant visits, plans and timetables.

2. Involvement of faculty and students on task forces, competency teams and open meetings with the project staff and consultants.

3. Workshops for faculty sponsored by OLL and other institutions in the United Colleges of San Antonio consortium.

4. A faculty resource center containing published and audio-visual data on educational change and innovation.

5. Close contact with "user" offices like those of the Registrar and Director of Facilities and Finance when planning changes in system operations.

6. A series of one-page explanatory sheets directed at a general audience on topics like "Competency Based Learning" and "Competence Assessment at OLL."

7. Informational letters and handouts directed at incoming freshmen and administered through the Mentor Program.

8. Informational meetings with the College's standing committees and councils to keep them informed of plans, developments, and timelines for the project, and to solicit feedback from them.

9. Open hearings on the competency statements.

10. A report to the faculty on the history of curriculum development and competency based learning at OLL, prefaced to the Academic Affairs Committee resolution on the Competency Based General Education program.

11. The present report, which will be circulated on campus.

AUDIENCES OUTSIDE OUR LADY OF THE LAKE

Dissemination of information has not progressed as far outside the institution, largely because the project is just completing its first year and conclusions seem premature. Most of the information sent outside the institution has been relatively informal to this point. Such information includes:

1. A mid-year report to the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education.

2. Personal contacts with a number of other institutions either working on or planning competency based learning programs. These include Mars Hill, Alverno, Sterling, and Oklahoma City Colleges. Austin College was also consulted, though more for curricular innovation than for CBL.

3. Participation at national conferences like the FIPSE Project Directors' Meeting, the AAHE Meeting on Faculty Development, and the Conference on Assessment of Experiential Learning (CAEL).

4. Faculty development conferences with consortium institutions at Incarnate Word College, St. Mary's University, and Oblate College of the Southwest.

5. Close contact with the Southern Regional Education Board, including informative packets of materials sent to them and consultation with Dr. Bill O'Connell.

6. This project report, which will be sent to interested individuals outside the institution.

VII. THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

The first year of the FIPSE program is now behind us, and real progress seems apparent. Through the hard work of the project director, the project change agent team, and the many OLL community members and others who have provided expertise and encouragement, the competency learning program is alive at Our Lady of the Lake. During the project's second year, much remains to be done; but with the same hard work and help, the project's objectives seem both attainable and worthwhile.

THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PROJECT

During the second year of the competency based learning project, much of the preliminary planning will have been accomplished, and the project team can work toward implementation of this planning. Project activities will include:

1. Concentrated focus on the specification of evaluation criteria and procedures by the competency evaluation teams, and design or adaptation of assessment instruments for the general education competencies.

2. Review and evaluation of the competency statements in light of the work being done on evaluation criteria and standards.

3. Planning and developing the competency learning programs for the major areas and professional schools.

4. Design of alternative learning experiences and revision of present courses to fit the competency learning model.

5. Testing of the planned systems changes and computer based interactive processes.

6. Continuation of work by the Assessment Center on processes for evaluating non-traditional learning.

7. Training of a corps of competent faculty and student Mentors.

8. Implementation of the Personal Development Seminar for new students.

9. Initiation of a systematic faculty professional development program.

10. Revision of faculty work load formulas in the light of new roles required by the competency program.

11. Continued interpretation of the competency program to the OLL community.

12. Development of materials and procedures for helping other institutions that are working on competency based programs.

FOLLOW-UP FUNDING PROPOSALS

In working with curriculum planning and systems development, the project team has identified a number of areas where supplemental funding would be useful to help the College carry out its competency based learning program. For example, both the Learning Center and the Assessment Center are important resources for the competency program, and they will need further development to be effective. The Learning Center needs improved information processing equipment, carrel study areas, storage areas for books and materials, and a full-time staff. The Assessment Center needs both additional computer capability and assessment instruments and materials. Some staffing, and released time for faculty members to develop evaluation materials would also improve the Center's operations. There are also alternative learning programs that would benefit from funding assistance. A comprehensive internship program, for example, needs careful coordination and administration, and an Internship Office could use grant funds to help absorb start-up costs. While the College is committed to its programs, like most private colleges today it has limited resources and many needs. The project staff must make the needs it has identified known to the Vice President for Development and the Academic Dean, and supplemental grant proposals should be written to continue the work begun by the FIPSE program.

VIII. CONCLUSION

A review of the short term objectives of the project listed earlier in this report, and of the timetables outlined in the FIPSE proposal, indicates that the competency based learning program is generally on schedule at the end of its first year. As the mid-year report to the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education shows, some areas have taken longer than originally planned. The formulation of competency statements, for example, turned out to be a much more difficult and time consuming process than the proposal writers had imagined it would be. On the other hand, development of an advising program and the decision to implement the CBL general education program with freshmen went more quickly than anticipated, and the project is ahead of schedule there. Some planning areas---development of an integrated management system, for instance--have proceeded about on schedule. All in all, then, the first year of the project would seem to have been a successful one in terms of progress toward the project's short term objectives.

It is more difficult at this stage to analyze progress toward the project's long range objectives. Some of these objectives cannot be fully assessed for about four years, until the first students graduate from the competency based program. Cost effectiveness should be measurable after the program has run for a year or so, and some preliminary conclusions will be drawn fairly quickly, but even here it is too early to make a reasonable assessment at the end of the project's first year.

Some results are evident at this stage, although they are not necessarily the stated objectives of the program. To the change agent team, at least there is evident an increased interest in curriculum and the educational process among faculty, students, and administrators. Instructors are re-examining their courses to see if they are really doing what they intend to do. Students are increasingly critical of poorly designed courses, and open and motivated to undertake new kinds of learning experiences. Administrators are more open to change, experimentation, and alternatives to the traditional ways of doing things.

Besides the curricular and systems improvements achieved during its two year course, Our Lady of the Lake's CBL project will have revived a spirit of educational curiosity and intellectual ferment at the institution.